

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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E.O. 11652 N/A
TAGS PINT, AR
SUBJECT A TALE OF TWO DEMONSTRATIONS

1. BASKING IN THE SUNSHINY AFTERMATH OF ARGENTINA'S WORLD SOCCER CUP TRIUMPH, PRESIDENT VIDELA IS CURRENTLY REAPING SOME OF THE POLITICAL BENEFITS ACCRUING FROM THE SPORTS FEAT. THERE HAS NOT BEEN A SIGNIFICANT POPULAR DEMONSTRATION OF POLITICAL IMPORTANCE IN ARGENTINA SINCE THE ARMED FORCES TOOK OVER TWO YEARS AGO. NOT, AT LEAST, UNTIL A FEW DAYS AFTER THE FINAL SOCCER GAME WHEN SOME 6,000 CHEERING YOUTH TURNED OUT AT PLAZA DE MAYO IN BUENOS AIRES TO CELEBRATE THE VICTORY. WHILE THE ORIGINAL PURPOSES OF THE RALLY ORGANIZERS REMAIN OBSCURE, THE ASSEMBLAGE QUICKLY TURNED INTO A DEMONSTRATION OF POPULAR SUPPORT FOR GENERAL VIDELA. THE WAY HIS AIDES TELL THE STORY, VIDELA WAS RELUCTANT TO APPEAR BEFORE THE CROWD AT FIRST, BUT EVENTUALLY WAS PERSUADED TO GREET THE YOUNGSTERS FROM HIS OFFICE BALCONY. WHEN HE DID SO, THE YOUTH ENTHUSIASTICALLY CHEERED THE PRESIDENT. CHARACTERISTICALLY, VIDELA GESTURED TO THE CROWD NOT TO CONVERT THE FESTIVE OCCASION INTO A DEMAGOGIC POLITICAL EVENT. A FEW DAYS LATER VIDELA WAS SIMILARLY CHEERED AT THE OPENING OF THE ANNUAL LIVESTOCK FAIR IN BUENOS AIRES.

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2. THE LURKING DOUBTS TUGGING AT THE GOA DURING THE PERIOD OF THE FINANCIALLY ONEROUS CONSTRUCTION OF STADIUMS AND OTHER INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS THAT THEY MIGHT BE FINANCING A WHITE ELEPHANT HAVE ALL BUT FADED AWAY NOW IN THE LIGHT OF ARGENTINA'S GLORIOUS SOCCER VICTORY. LUCKILY FOR VIDELA--AND UNLUCKILY FOR HIS NEAREST POLITICAL RIVAL

ADMIRAL MASSERA--IT IS THE PRESIDENT AND NOT THE JUNTA WHO GETS THE CREDIT FOR THE SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME OF THE WORLD SOCCER MATCHES. THE NEW SENSE OF CONFIDENCE AND POPULAR ENTHUSIASM WHICH ACCRUE IN VIDELA'S FAVOR HAVE INFUSED SOME POLITICAL OBSERVERS WITH ENTHUSIASM THAT THIS SHY, NERVOUS MAN CAN BE CONVERTED TO A POPULAR POLITICAL FIGURE YET. SUCH PROJECTIONS MAY PROVE TO BE EPHEMERAL AS ARGENTINA RETURNS TO ITS EVERY DAY PROBLEMS, SOME OF THEM QUITE SERIOUS SUCH AS THE RISING COST OF LIVING, BUT POLITICAL OBSERVERS NOW HAVE A NEW QUESTION TO ANSWER WHETHER VIDELA WILL PROVE CAPABLE OF HARNESSING THE NEW-FOUND ENERGY INTO A MORE COHESIVE POLITICAL VEHICLE FOR HIS OWN PERSONAL USE.

3. THERE WAS ANOTHER DEMONSTRATION LAST WEEK WHICH WAS MORE AKIN TO THOSE OF ARGENTINAS RECENT PAST. ON JULY 1, A CROWD ESTIMATED AT 4,000-5,000 PERSONS GATHERED AT A DOWNTOWN BUENOS AIRES CHURCH TO HEAR A MASS IN MEMORY OF FORMER PRESIDENT JUAN PERON. FOLLOWING THE MASS, THE CROWD ATTEMPTED TO MARCH INTO PLAZA DE MAYO CHANTING PERONIST PARY SLOGANS AND DEMANDING FREEDOM FOR DETAINED EX-PRESIDENT ISABEL PERON. THE CROWD WAS EVENTUALLY DISPERSED BY FEDERAL POLICE USING TEAR GAS. A FEW DEMONSTRATORS REPORTEDLY WERE BRIEFLY DETAINED AND SUBSEQUENTLY RELEASED.

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4. JUST AS THE PRO-VIDELA DEMONSTRATION REKINDLES HOPE AMONG GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS THAT A NEW ERA MAY BE DAWNING IN ARGENTINA, THE PERONIST DEMONSTRATION THRESHES UP DOUBTS ABOUT THE DEPTH AND SOLIDITY OF THE ROOTS OF THE "NATIONAL REORGANIZATION PROCESS" BEGUN MARCH 1976. AS AUGUST 1, THE EFFECTIVE DATE FOR THE START OF VIDELA'S SECOND TERM AND WE GET FURTHER INTO THIS NEW STAGE OF GOVERNMENT, THESE TWO CONTRARY TENDENCIES--THE EFFORT OF VIDELA TO ASSUME THE ROLE OF POLITICAL LEADER ON THE ONE HAND AND THE RESISTANCE OF THE PERONIST POLITICAL MACHINE ON THE OTHER--WILL COME MORE SHARPLY INTO FOCUS.
CASTRO

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